

WALLOWA RANGER STATION
602 First Street
Wallowa
Wallowa County
Oregon

HABS No. OR-157

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
WALLOWA RANGER STATION

HABS No. OR-157

Location: The Wallowa Ranger Station is located in the city of Wallowa, Oregon at 602 West First Street (southwest corner of First and Madison Streets), in Wallowa County. The compound occupies Block 19 of Mc Donald's Addition within Section 14, Township 1 North, Range 42 East, Willamette Meridian.

U.S.G.S. Wallowa 7.5 Quadrangle

Present Owner: Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
P.O. Box 907
Baker City, Oregon 97814

Present Occupant: Multiple occupants

Present Use: Visitors center; residence; storage facilities

Significance: The Wallowa Ranger Station compound is historically significant as it represents a fifty-four year period in which the Forest Service was active within the town of Wallowa. Wallowa was the original location of the Supervisor's Office after the formation of the Wallowa Forest Reserve in 1907 and also was the headquarters for several Ranger Districts. Though these buildings are from a later period, they are the only remaining significant structures associated with the Forest Service within the town of Wallowa which signify the Forest Service's involvement in the community.

Historically, the Wallowa Ranger Station is significant on a regional level for its associations with the Civilian Conservation Corps. It represents the work performed under a unique direct-aid work-relief program established in a response to the Depression. Architecturally significant as well as historically, the Wallowa Ranger Station is an intact excellent representative example of Civilian Conservation Corps era site planning and construction style. The interest in comprehensive site planning by the Forest Service culminated in the Depression era administrative sites. Buildings were organized to function efficiently with the least interruption in activities. The Wallowa Ranger Station embodies these planning principles through the careful placement of the five buildings on the site. The office is the most publicly accessible building on the site, located at the corner of First and Madison streets. All of the utilitarian buildings are located directly south of the office. Located west of the office, the residence is set apart from the other four buildings.

The Rustic Style was adopted by the Forest Service during a period of general interest in revival styles, however it was further developed as a non-intrusive style. Ellis Groben, compiler of *Acceptable Plans: Forest Service Administrative Buildings* states "No matter how well buildings may be designed, with few exceptions, they seldom enhance the beauty of their natural settings." He suggests, "...erecting only such structures as are

absolutely essential and then only of such designs which harmonize with, or are the least objectionable to nature's particular environment." Groben favored a regional style rather than a universal style. He encouraged each region to base its architectural styles upon "climatic considerations, vegetation and forest cover."

The Wallowa Ranger Station exemplifies this Forest Service design philosophy through the use of simple forms and natural materials and colors. The buildings are distinctly regional and site specific, being more residential in character than other depression era administrative buildings located in remote mountainous areas. The materials used are also regional, coming from local and regional sources (fir, river rock, and Idaho cedar). The significant features include wide horizontal cedar siding combined with board and batten, stone masonry, multi-pane double hung wood sash windows with shutters, squared timber posts with curved brackets, wrought-iron light fixtures and hardware, and the U.S. Forest Service tree symbol. Interior features include knotty pine paneling, river-rock fireplace, and decorative crown molding.

The Wallowa Ranger Station meets the National Register criteria A and C and was given the highest ranking by E. Gail Throop in her Evaluation Report. She concludes the evaluation with the following:

The qualities of significance in local history and in architecture are present in the Wallowa Ranger Station. Possessing integrity of form, material, and environment, the buildings of the complex also retain the primary elements of fabric, setting, location, design and workmanship. The association of buildings to each other, to the site and to a uniform appearance is strong. Highly stylistic and visually appealing, the Wallowa Ranger Station is a regionally outstanding example of an architectural expression invested with special aesthetic and associative values by the agency that created it. As a Forest Service administrative site, built under the auspices of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Wallowa Ranger Station is associated with a pivotal federal land-managing agency, and with events important in 20th century American history and in resource conservation history. It contains information about the rustic style of architecture, distinctive, in Forest Service ownership, to the Depression era, and particular to the Pacific Northwest Region. The Wallowa Ranger Station meets the criteria of significance and is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. (Throop. "Evaluation Report")

PART I: PHYSICAL SETTING OF WALLOWA RANGER STATION

Located at the southwest corner of First and Madison Streets, the Wallowa Ranger Station is situated at the western end of the small eastern Oregon town of Wallowa, Wallowa County. The Wallowa Ranger Station occupies Block 19 of McDonald's Addition within Section 14, Township 1 North, Range 42 East, Willamette Meridian, in the USGS Wallowa Quadrangle. Situated near State Highway 82, the Wallowa Ranger Station is 19 miles northwest of Enterprise and approximately 45 miles northeast of LaGrande. Residential buildings to the north, east, and south are sparsely spaced; a large pasture is to the west. Low hills rise to the south a short distance away. The Wallowa Ranger Station consisting of five buildings, is sited on an open, flat parcel of land. Landscaping at the site is minimal.

The town of Wallowa, with an elevation of 2,941 feet, is surrounded by the Wallowa Mountains to the south, the Wallowa Valley plateau to the southeast, and the Blue Mountains to the northwest. The picturesque lumber town, with a population of approximately 800, is located along Highway 82 which winds easterly through the Wallowa Valley. Wallowa County encompasses 3.3% of the total area of Oregon and lies in the northeast corner of the state, almost entirely in the Grande Ronde River Basin. Established in 1887, it is one of Oregon's larger counties totaling 2,033,920 acres.

Wallowa County, known as the "Switzerland of America", "Lake and Canyon Country", and "Land of Chief Joseph", is divided naturally into four parts; the high mountains, the valley with its adjoining grassland plateau, the timber covered plateau, and the canyons. The Wallowa Mountains tower over 3,153 square miles of the county, much of which was once inhabited by Chief Joseph's band of Nez Perce Indians. Hell's Canyon, the deepest river in North America, marks the eastern border of Wallowa County and Oregon. The Eagle Cap Wilderness Area occupies the southwestern portion of the county, and a large expanse of flat valley land comprises the central, north and northeastern portions. Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, established in 1940, now totals 358,461 acres. The wilderness area is characterized by high alpine lakes and meadows, bare granite peaks and ridges, glaciated valleys, timber in the lower valleys, and scattered alpine timber on the upper slopes. Elevations range from 2,900 feet in lower valleys to nearly 10,000 feet on the highest of the peaks.

PART II: HISTORICAL CONTEXT-WALLOWA RANGER STATION

a. Town of Wallowa and the Surrounding Valley

The name 'Wallowa' originated from the Nez Perce Native American word for a part of a willow fish trap the tribes used in their fishing practices. Wallowa was often called the 'Gate City' by early settlers as it was the first town they encountered when entering the Wallowa Valley. The Wallowa River flows just east of the town, furnishing water power for mills in the early settlement.

The first settlers homesteaded just four miles northwest of Wallowa in Lower Valley. In 1874, the first post office, called Wallowa, was established in the pioneer Bramlet family home. A private school was built in 1876 at the confluence of Bear Creek and the Wallowa River, and in 1879 the first public school was opened near this same place.

The land for the town was surveyed and platted on March 22, 1889 by the Island City Milling and Mercantile Company. That same year, the first general store opened. On November 23, 1896, the company dedicated the streets and alleys to the public. The town of Wallowa was incorporated in 1895. The first church in Wallowa was the Methodist Church built in 1899. In a 1902 publication, Wallowa is described as a thriving town with a population of 300 and boasted of a water system and electricity. By this time, there were four mills in town, two sawmills, a planing mill, and a flouring mill. The major lumber mill in the valley was located in Wallowa: the Nimbly-Mimnaugh Mill established in 1910. The mill remained in business until 1964 (*Wallowa County Centennial Walking Tour*, compiled by the Wallowa County Centennial brochure committee. History of Union and Wallowa Counties. Western Historical Publishing Company. 1902).

Because Wallowa and the other small towns in the valley were not located on a major thoroughfare, their population never increased substantially. Wallowa's population remained stable for many years. Wallowa and the towns of Lostine, Enterprise and Joseph have suffered in recent years due to the diminishing timber industry.

b. Wallowa National Forest

Prior to the turn of the century much of the timber and grazing land was in private ownership. A single wagon road provided the only access in and out of the entire Wallowa County until the railroad came to the County in 1909. During the last quarter of the 19th century, the lumber industry began to look to the west for more timber to harvest. At the same time, a few men such as Grover Cleveland, Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt realized that action must be taken to preserve the country's natural resources. As a result, much of the remaining public forest land was withdrawn from entry under the Homestead Act, Timber Claim and other land acquisition laws, and was set aside to become forest reserves and later national forests.

On May 6, 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt established the Wallowa Forest Reserve which contained 747,200 acres. By 1907, several forest reserves were combined under the name Wallowa and the term 'reserves' was dropped in favor of National Forests. Several boundary changes were made to the Wallowa National Forest over the following 26 years. The boundaries have remained unchanged since 1928.

Initially, Wallowa served as headquarters for two of four Assistant Rangers to the Ranger in charge of the Chesnimnus and Wallowa Forest Reserves (1906). The two Assistant Rangers, one for the Chesnimnus Forest Reserve and one for the Wallowa Forest Reserve, and a Forest Guard,

resided in Wallowa (the Chesnimnus Forest Reserve later became part of the Wallowa National Forest). These men spent most of their time on the Reserves rather than in town. There was no official ranger station and the men occupied cabins or tents. The original headquarters for the Supervisor of the Wallowa and Chesnimnus Forest Reserves was LaGrande, but by 1905, the headquarters moved to Wallowa. A letter dated December 18, 1905 was sent to Ranger Howard K. O'Brien from William Hall, Acting Forester, Washington D.C., authorizing the lease of an office in Wallowa.

Howard O'Brien was appointed Forest Ranger in September 1905 and in October, he took and passed the examination for Forest Supervisor. The move of the headquarters to Wallowa was logical as Wallowa was more centrally located within the Reserve. Also, O'Brien resided in Wallowa. A letter from Washington D.C. on January 25, 1906 authorized O'Brien to purchase numerous tools. In December 1906, O'Brien was promoted from Ranger in Charge to Forest Supervisor. Personnel employed at the Wallowa Forest Reserve in 1906 were; Howard K. O'Brien, Ranger in Charge (and Forest Supervisor), Charles Black, Assistant Ranger, Marshal Giffen, Assistant Ranger, William Stewart, Assistant Ranger, Alva Keeler, Guard.

Work of these men in the early days of the Forest Reserves consisted of counting sheep and cattle, documenting forest fires, and selecting future administrative sites. Alva Keeler, an early Forest Guard, working for the Reserve only one year 1906-1907, traveled constantly counting livestock and talking with ranchers. An account by early Forest Ranger, W. Grady Miller describes the duties of the rangers; "All rangers did approximately 90% field work with an occasional office detail of a week to clean up the accumulation of work" (Tucker: *Historical Sketches of the Wallowa National Forest.*, p. 266).

The first Forest Service telephone line from Wallowa to the Sled Springs Ranger Station, was constructed in 1907. The town of Wallowa was then the headquarters for the Forest Supervisor's Office and the Bear Creek District office. The first year after the establishment of the Wallowa National Forest, 1910, a large fire occurred. At that time, Forest Reserve personnel and ranchers worked together to stop the fires. In 1915, the Wallowa National Forest had its first large timber sale made to Eastern Oregon Lumber Company whose mill was in Enterprise. The second, large timber sale was to Minam Lumber Company and occurred between 1918 and 1924.

The original six Ranger Districts on the Wallowa National Forest were Bear Creek District, Chesnimnus District, Imnaha District, Snake River District, and Sled Springs District. These six Districts were later altered to four as a result of the combining of Bear Creek and Sled Springs Districts (Bear-Sleds District in 1919), and the Imnaha and Snake River Districts (Imnaha-Snake District in 1921). In an effort to consolidate, the Supervisor's Office was moved from Wallowa to Enterprise in 1933. On June 30, 1954, the Wallowa and Whitman National Forests were officially consolidated to create the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Forest Service personnel were transferred or promoted and the Supervisor's Office at Enterprise was eliminated and consolidated in the Baker Supervisor's Office. Currently, the six Ranger Districts include Baker, La Grande, Unity, Wallowa Valley, Hell's Canyon NRA and the Eagle Cap Wilderness.

c. Civilian Conservation Corps-National Level

The Civilian Conservation Corps arose from the Great Depression as a means of providing work to the many thousands of unemployed youth. As directed by President Roosevelt in April 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps was to be administered by a combination of federal departments. The Department of Labor was to select men for enrollment, the War Department was to enroll, feed, clothe, and house the men and the Department of Agriculture and Interior were to select work

projects, supervise and administer. The Director of Emergency Conservation Work was to develop policies, issue directives and coordinate the four departments.

In addition to providing jobs to youths, provisions were made to hire Local Experienced Men (LEM) to supervise and train the youths. The LEMs were experienced craftsmen who were unemployed. Their employment helped provide local economic relief as well as skills and experience to accomplish tasks.

d. Civilian Conservation Corps-Region 6

Twenty national forests in the states of Oregon and Washington made up Region 6 during the Civilian Conservation Corps years. The North Pacific Region, now the Pacific Northwest Region, had the fourth largest group of Civilian Conservation Corps men. One hundred and seven camps were slated to open in Region 6. After the first season 84 were in operation. During the winter months some of the camps in colder climates were moved to the coastal forests. By the end of July 1933, side camps were also operating throughout Region 6. These side camps were established to save on travel time thus increasing work time. All camps were run by the Army 19th Corps Area, headquartered at the Presidio in San Francisco and was the largest Corps Area in geographical size and number of camps.

Civilian Conservation Corps boys were paid \$30 a month with \$22 being deducted and sent back to families. This provided relief to their families many of whom depended upon this as the sole source of income. In addition to the economic support to the workers' families, local economies in the small Oregon towns were boosted by the purchase of local materials and the hiring of LEMs.

The timber industry in Oregon greatly benefited due to the demand for hundreds of millions of board feet of lumber used in the Civilian Conservation Corps construction projects. "The quantity of dimension lumber required to build a single ranger station was immense, and the quality of that lumber may be, in part, responsible for the soundness of the surviving structures" (Throop, p. 26).

e. Civilian Conservation Corps-Wallowa National Forest

The Civilian Conservation Corps boys were moved around from year to year so that the same Company might never work two seasons in the same place. This was true of the work done on the Wallowa National Forest. The first company assigned to the forest was comprised of local boys, with a number from Union County. Leaving in the fall of 1933, they were replaced in the spring by a company from Illinois. The following spring, in 1935, a company comprised primarily of Portland youth went to work on the Wallowa National Forest. In 1936, the enrollees were from Massachusetts. In spring of 1937 a company comprised of Minnesotans arrived and began work on the Wallowa Ranger Station Residence. But due to numerous forest fires that summer, the work was not completed.

There was no camp assigned to the Forest in 1938, however a detached crew of 15 enrollees from the Squaw Creek Camp on the Umatilla Indian Reservation worked on the buildings at the Wallowa Ranger Station for a period of time, staying in the side camp buildings at the mouth of Water Canyon.

WALLOWA RANGER STATION
HABS No. OR-157 (Page 7)

In 1939, Company 282 arrived with enrollees from New Jersey and New York and helped complete the Wallowa Ranger Station. This company returned to Enterprise in 1940. Due to the small number of enrollees it was combined with Company 6440 which had been recruited from Georgia and Alabama. Company 6440 returned in 1941 but dwindled rapidly as job opportunities increased and the economy strengthened (Tucker: *Historical Sketches of the Wallowa National Forest*). All of the camps on the Wallowa National Forest except for Camp Imnaha of 1933, were known as Camp Cloverdale.

In addition to the construction of ranger stations, the Civilian Conservation Corps also constructed bridges, lookouts, guard stations, and recreation structures. Although many of these structures were much needed by the Forest Service, their construction was not the primary function of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Their main contribution in Oregon was in the area of fire fighting and road construction.

PART III. SPECIFIC HISTORY OF SITE

a. Dates of Initial Planning and Development

According to former Forest Ranger Wade Hall, the fire equipment building and office were built first, prior to his arrival in 1936, and the residence was built last. Original blueprints are dated; May 6, 1936 for the "Fire Equipment and Storehouse" (Fire Equipment Building), May 15, 1936 for the "Four Car Garage and Wood Shed" (Four-Car Garage), May 18, 1936 for the "Gas and Oil Service and Storage Building" (Gas House), May 21, 1936 for the "Two Room Office Building" (Office), and July 14, 1936 for the "Six Room Ranger Residence" (Residence).

The residence, gas house, office, and garage were designed by Howard Lane (deceased) who was an employee of the Forest Service, Portland Office during that period. The fire equipment building was designed by M.P. Arnold, also in the Portland office. All buildings were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees and the Local Experienced Men. Forest personnel supervising the work were; Foremen Robert Reams, Lloyd Squibb, Klon Mathews; E. P. Humphries, carpenter foreman; Oren Foster, junior foreman; Ira L. Waterman, chief mechanic; Lloyd Evans, mechanic. Alec Dawson was the chief stonemason (Interview with Wade Hall. Throop, E. Gail. "Evaluation Report").

b. Changes in Plan and Evolution of Site

Originally, plans indicated two additional buildings were to be constructed; an assistant ranger's residence and a smaller garage. For unknown reasons, these buildings were never built. The drawings for the residence (HAB No. OR-157-B) are dated July 14, 1936. The residence was constructed according to plan with the exception that the plan was reversed. A December 23, 1936 sketch made of the residence shows the residence as built, indicating the change in the plan. The shed porch roof, according to plan, on the rear elevation originally extended the entire length of the dormer which was directly above it. The roof was shown supported by chamfered post. As constructed, the roof only sheltered the back door and was supported by large brackets.

The Wallowa Ranger Station served as a Ranger Station until 1981 when the headquarters were moved to Enterprise, Oregon. The compound served as a work center and sleeping quarters for the Eagle Cap Ranger District until 1990. The office is now rented to the City of Wallowa and functions as a Visitors Center. The residence is rented and cared for by the City. The fire equipment building, garage, and gas house are used for storage by the City. Plans for the compound include transferring ownership to the City of Wallowa.

c. Associated individuals

Rangers of the Bear Creek District and the Bear-Sleds District with headquarters at Wallowa (According to "Historical Sketches of the Wallowa National Forest")

Joseph Harris 1907 - 1911

Oscar Pratt 1911 - 1918

G. LeRoy Smith 1918 - 1919

Louis Carpenter 1919 - 1939

Wade B. Hall 1939 - 1950 (first Ranger to reside in Wallowa Ranger Station Residence)

Victor L. Kriemeyer 1950 - 1955

Robert L. Bjorensen 1955 - 1957

Bennett O. Pearson 1957 - 1961

Thomas L. Griffith 1961 - ?

Roy Sines, ? - 1977
Frank Olson - 1977-1981

d. Developments Associated with Site

The town of Wallowa had been the location of Forest Service activity since 1905 when the Supervisor's headquarters were located here. Though the Supervisor's Office was moved to Enterprise in 1933, the District headquarters remained in Wallowa and in 1936 work began on the five buildings of the Wallowa Ranger Station. It is unlikely the compound would have been built were it not for the establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The availability of the young laborers enabled the Forest Service to conduct numerous projects that otherwise would have had no manpower or funding.

It is interesting to note that the buildings were constructed when the amount of Forest Service activity was diminishing in Wallowa due to the relocation of the Supervisor's Office to Enterprise in 1933. Also the Civilian Conservation Corps' excellent firefighting skills resulted in less participation on the part of the locals in the fighting of fires, thus lessening the community involvement with the Forest Service. The construction of the compound highlights a turning point in the relationship between the public and the Forest Service.

Former Forest Service employee, Ivan Carper, recalls suppers given at the compound for transferred Forest Service employees as well as some Christmas parties and retirement parties. The site was not used by the City for public events.

PART IV. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The Wallowa Ranger Station compound was designed according to plans drawn by a number of Forest Service architects/engineers (see discussion in Part III a.). It was comprised of five buildings; a residence, office, garage, fire equipment building, and gas house. The buildings were constructed between 1936 and 1940 by the Civilian Conservation Corps under the supervision of the LEM. Emmett U. Blanchfield, Forest Service landscape architect for Region 6, was involved in the landscape and site planning for the complex in 1936.

Arranged in an L-shape, the plan is typical of other ranger stations of the period. The office is at the center of the group and is the most publicly accessible building, being on the corner of First and Madison streets. The four car garage is directly behind (south) the office and the fire equipment building is behind the garage. The gas house is to the west of the garage and behind the office. The residence is set slightly apart from the other buildings to the west and parallel to the office. A garage and assistant ranger's residence, located between the office and the ranger's residence, were proposed as part of the complex as depicted in a 1936: these buildings were never constructed.

Note: See HAB No. OR-157 A through E data forms for specific building information.

PART V: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

a. Architectural Drawings

Location: Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor's Office in Baker City, Oregon.

Date: May 6, 15, 18, 21, 1936

Location: USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region, Engineering Unit, Portland, Oregon.

Date: June 14, 1936, August 5, 1943.

b. Historic Views

Notes: A search was made for historic photographs. The National Archives was contacted, however no photos were located. Wade Hall, former ranger at Wallowa Ranger Station, has an extensive slide collection documenting his years with the US Forest Service, however he had few photos of the complex buildings. Mr. Hall resides in Baker City, Oregon.

c. Interviews

Wade Hall, May 1991, Baker City, Oregon. Former Forest Ranger and first occupant of Wallowa Ranger Station Residence. Interviewed by Sally Donovan and Kimberly Lakin.

Ivan Carper, May 1991, Wallowa, Oregon. Former employee of Forest Service with headquarters at Wallowa Ranger Station 1953-1980. Responsible for many of the minor alterations and upkeep of the buildings at the Wallowa Ranger Station compound. Interviewed by Kimberly Lakin and Sally Donovan.

Elsie Makin, May 1991, Wallowa, Oregon. Longtime resident of Wallowa. Family had trucking business and hauled equipment and livestock for the Forest Service in the late 1930s. Telephone interview by Kimberly Lakin.

Frank Olson, Wallowa, Oregon. July 1991. Former employee of Forest Service with headquarters at the Wallowa Ranger Station. Phone interview by Sally Donovan.

d. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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Tucker, Gerald J., *Historical Sketches of the Wallowa National Forest*. Located at the Cultural Resources Department of Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Enterprise, Oregon.

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2. Secondary and Published Sources

Otis, Alison et al. *The Forest Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-42*. USDA Forest Service, 1986.

Author unknown. *An Illustrated History of Union and Wallowa Counties*. Western Historical Publishing Company. 1902.

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e. Likely sources not yet investigated:

Aerial photographs may exist in US Forest Service aerial photograph collections in Salt Lake City, Utah.

PART VI. PROJECT INFORMATION

This is a mitigative recording required by a Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement between the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer. Project Supervisors were Contracting Officer Marianne Klingler, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and Bruce Womack, Contracting Officer's Representative.

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Date: August 1, 1991

